GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:309
ANSWERED ON:05.09.2007
ADVERSE IMPACT OF OVER- EXTRACTION OF WATER
Khan Shri Sunil

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the WWF Report of March 2007, wherein the adverse impact of over-extraction of ground-water has been highlighted;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY)

(a), (b) & (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a), (b) & (c) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 309 DUE FOR REPLY ON 5.9.2007 REGARDING ' ADVERSE IMPACT OF OVER- EXTRACTION OF WATER' BY SHRI SUNIL KHAN

(a) & (b) The World Wide Fund for Nature, an international Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), in their report titled 'World's Top Ten Rivers At Risk' has listed the river Ganges as one of the world's ten rivers facing risk due to over extraction of water for agriculture. According to the report, over extraction of water for agriculture in the Ganges has caused the reduction in surface water resources causing increased dependence on ground water. It has led to loss of water-based livelihoods, biodiversity, and deficiency in soil organic content. Inadequate recharging of ground water impairs the natural cleansing of Arsenic. The report has suggested to reduce excessive water extraction through efficient irrigation of crops, switching to production of less thirsty crops, use of local knowledge, removing agricultural subsidies, instituting payments for water services, developing a network of partnerships that promote sustainable development and bringing community education and awareness etc.

(c) The steps taken by the Government in this regard are as follows:

(i) To check Over-exploitation of surface and ground water and its recharging:

(1) A concept report titled 'Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Ground Water' has been prepared, which has identified a total of 4.5 lakh sq.km. area in the country needing artificial recharge of ground water.

(2) The Central Ground Water Board (the Board) has circulated Manual/ Guide on Artificial Recharge to Ground Water to the States/ Union Territories to enable them to formulate area specific artificial recharge schemes to check the declining trend of ground water levels.

(3) A demonstrative scheme on "Rain Water Harvesting and Artificial Recharge to Ground Water" and 'Study of recharge to ground water' is being implemented by the Board.

(4) Ministry of Water Resources has proposed the scheme on "Artificial Recharge to Ground Water through Dug Wells" for implementation in over-exploited/ Critical/ Semi-Critical areas in 7 States namely Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat & Madhya Pradesh to provide sustainability to the dug wells.

(5) Government has constituted Artificial Recharge of Ground Water Advisory Council under the Union Minister of Water Resources, which has representation from various Ministries concerned with rainwater harvesting like Ministry of Rural Development, Urban Development, Agriculture, Environment & Forests, States/ UTs, financial institutions, Industries/ Public Undertakings and NGOs.

(6) Central Ground Water Authority, constituted under Section 3(3) of the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986, has notified 43 over-exploited areas in the country for regulation of ground water development and management and another 65 over-exploited areas for registration of ground water abstraction structures. The Authority also regulates development of ground water by new industries/ projects in over-exploited/ Critical/ Semi- critical areas. It has issued directions to Group Housing Societies, Institutes, Hotels, Industries, Farm Houses, etc. in the notified areas of Delhi, Faridabad, Gurgaon and Ghaziabad and other areas of NCT Delhi where ground water table is below 8 metres from ground surface, to adopt rain water harvesting system.

(7) The Central Ground Water Authority has directed the Chief Secretaries of the concerned States to take all measures to adopt artificial recharge to ground water/ promote rain water harvesting in all the over-exploited areas falling under their jurisdiction and ensure inclusion of roof top rain water harvesting in the building bye-laws.

(8) State/Union Territories have been requested to enact the necessary legislation regulating and control of Management of Ground-water including rainwater harvesting for ground water recharge.

(9) A number of water-shed development programmes have been undertaken at national level covering more than 187 lakh ha. of area under the X Five Year Plan.

(ii) Remedial measures for arsenic contamination:

(1) In order to delineate arsenic free deeper aquifers, the Board carries ground water exploration in arsenic infested areas of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, wherein exploratory wells tapping arsenic free aquifer zones are constructed and handed over to the State Governments for utilization.

(2) Besides, the Board also provides technical guidance for identification of source for drinking water in arsenic affected areas.

(3) Apart from these, Mass Awareness Programme and Water Management Training Programme in different arsenic affected areas are being organized by the Board to make aware the local people and for providing technical guidance.

(iii) Conservation of biodiversity:

Protected Areas like Sundarbans Tiger Reserve in West Bengal, Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary in Bihar, etc., alongside the river Ganges and its tributaries, have been declared for protection of species, including aquatic species and their habitat.

(iv) Checking river pollution:

Under the National River Conservation Plan, various works such as interception and diversion of sewage, construction of sewage treatment plants, low cost sanitation, river front development, afforestation, public participation, public awareness etc, have been undertaken for pollution abatement of major rivers in the country, including the Ganges.